

Small Group Guide

****Ephesians 5:1-21 | The Prison Epistles Week 12****

Opening Prayer & Icebreaker

****Prayer:**** Begin by asking God to open hearts and minds to His Word and to help the group apply these truths practically.

****Icebreaker:**** Share a time when you tried to imitate someone you admired (a parent, mentor, coach, etc.). What was challenging about it? What came naturally?

Key Takeaways from the Sermon

1. ****Imitation flows from identity**** - We don't fake righteousness; we become like Christ by living out who we already are in Him.
2. ****Walking in holiness is a continuous, rhythmic pattern**** - It's not about spectacular achievements but quiet, humble obedience that rises as a sweet aroma to God.
3. ****We ARE light, not just IN light**** - Our identity has fundamentally changed from darkness to light in Christ.
4. ****Righteous living is about tasting joy, not begrudging obedience**** - Holiness reclaims what sin has stolen rather than taking away something valuable.

5. **Being filled with the Spirit is continuous** - It's an ongoing process that naturally produces encouragement, thanksgiving, and mutual submission.

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Text

1. **Read Ephesians 5:1-2.** What does it mean to be "imitators of God"? Why does Paul immediately connect this to walking in love and Christ's sacrifice?

2. **Verses 3-7** list several sins that shouldn't even be mentioned among believers. Why do you think Paul is so emphatic about these particular sins? What makes them incompatible with our identity in Christ?

3. **In verses 8-14**, Paul says we "were darkness" but now "are light." What's the difference between being IN darkness versus BEING darkness? How does this change our understanding of transformation?

Personal Reflection

4. The sermon emphasized that God never asks us to "fake righteousness." Where in your life have you felt like you're just going through the motions rather than living from your true identity in Christ?

5. Paul uses the image of a "sweet aroma" or "fragrant offering" to describe our lives. What does this look like practically? Can you think of someone whose life reflects this gentle, pleasing witness?

6. **Verse 10** says to "try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord." How do you currently discern what pleases God? What practices help you develop this Spirit-led discernment?

Going Deeper

7. The sermon mentioned that "walking in the righteousness of the Lord isn't about all the 'Do not Dos'—it's about walking in the dignity of our higher calling." How does this perspective change your approach to holiness?

8. **Verses 15-16** call us to "redeem the time." What are some practical ways you can redeem moments in your daily routine—conversations, decisions, ordinary tasks—as acts of worship or witness?

9. **Verses 18-21** describe being filled with the Spirit as producing mutual encouragement, thanksgiving, and submission. Which of these comes most naturally to you? Which is most challenging? Why?

Application

10. The sermon closed with three practical steps:

- **Walk Intentionally** (pray each morning)
- **Shine Naturally** (reflect Christ's light in one specific way)
- **Redeem Time** (10 minutes daily of specific thanksgiving)

Which of these resonates most with where you are spiritually right now? What would it look like to implement this week?

Practical Applications

Individual Practices

- **Morning Prayer Habit:** Start each day with, "Lord, help me imitate You today." Journal about how you see God answering this prayer.

- **Light Audit:** Identify one area of your life (work, home, social media, relationships) where you can intentionally reflect Christ's light this week. Be specific.

- **Time Redemption:** Set a daily 10-minute alarm for undistracted thanksgiving. Thank God for something specific each day.

Group Accountability

- **Share one specific way you'll "walk as light" this week.** Have group members text or call each other mid-week to encourage and check in.

- **Practice mutual encouragement:** Before closing, take time to speak "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs" over one another—share Scripture, sing together, or pray blessings over each other.

Community Connection

- If you're not already connected to a Bible study or fellowship group at Rivers Edge, commit to exploring one this week. Genuine Christian fellowship happens in walking through life together.

Memory Verse

****Ephesians 5:8**** - "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light."

Closing Reflection

****Question for the Week:**** If someone followed you around for a week, what "aroma" would your life produce? Would it be a sweet fragrance that points to Christ's sacrifice, or something else?

****Challenge:**** Choose one person in your life who needs to experience the light of Christ. Pray for them daily and look for one opportunity this week to be a redemptive agent in their life—through kindness, truth, or encouragement.

Closing Prayer

Pray together:

- For the Holy Spirit to continuously fill each group member
- For wisdom to walk carefully and redeem the time
- For courage to shine as light in specific situations this week
- For thanksgiving to become the rhythm of our hearts

****Next Steps:**** Encourage group members to read Ephesians 5:22-33 in preparation for next week's discussion on relationships and the church.